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How long are the elementary schools and the high schools to stand apart? How long are pupils in the seventh and eighth grades to be deprived of their right to a richer course of study because of the artificial line which has heretofore cut them off from geometry and biology, from the languages and literatures of other nations, and the skilled arts which train the eye and hand? How long are we to accept with complacence the wasteful and discouraging reviews which characterize the eighth grade, and compel children to mark time on the threshold of the great change into the first year of high school? How long are we to tolerate a curriculum in the first year of the high school which seems so strange to the ordinary child that he is alienated from the pursuit of higher knowledge?

These are the questions which we are to discuss today. The answer is brief and clear. So long as you listen to the dark counsels of those who say to you that children in the upper years of the elementary school cannot do more than they are now doing, you will hold them back. So long as you let those who scoff at their fellow-teachers make you think that high schools are for the few and that elementary schools have the secret formulas of democracy,

¹ Presented as the affirmative of a debate before the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association on February 23, 1916.

you will be content to shut your eyes to the fact that the American high school is one of the most typical expressions of our Western-world democracy. So long as you are willing to jog along with the clumsy school organization that originated in the middle of the last century, you will waste the time of children by your ox-cart methods.

If, on the contrary, you will open your eyes and realize that our high schools today register 30 per cent of all the children of high-school age, you will begin to see that the time has come to adopt a modern form of organization which will facilitate the continuation of every child's education. If you realize that the three R's have expanded in the modern world into science and civics, into art and knowledge of human life, you will be inspired with enthusiasm for the introduction of some of these better things into the earlier years of a child's life. Elementary schools should not be the homes of drudgery and the abode of the downtrodden. Elementary schools have a right to a part of the new light of a new age.

If we liberalize the elementary school, we shall also, in like spirit, liberalize the first year of the high school. When one thinks of the wall of Latin, algebra, and ancient history over which most of us climbed half a generation ago, he is certainly glad of an opportunity in mature life to knock a few stones from the foundation of that moss-grown barrier.

The answer, I say, is brief and clear. We cannot longer allow anyone to befool us into satisfaction with the present breach between the elementary schools and the high schools.

Lest there should be a few conservatives among us, let us begin by asking them what is sacred about the eight years of the present elementary school. Were these eight years determined upon after careful consideration? Not at all. The elementary school was, at the outset, an undefined and, in many respects, unlimited institution. One can remember, if his experience goes back to a district school, how the older boys and girls of the community came in during the winter term and took a little work when they were otherwise unoccupied on the farm or in the home. Pupils in such schools were frequently much older than our present eighth-grade pupils. The reason they came to the common school was that no

high school was near at hand to offer them extended opportunity. These older pupils were the forerunners of those who today are demanding a larger and a richer education than that which has heretofore characterized the grades.

Indeed, in New England, where economic conditions were favorable, the experiment was tried of a nine-year elementary school. Even today over the whole state of Maine, except in the large cities, the nine-year school is the standard school and expresses the ambition of the people for more education than can be included in the limits of a course based on the three R's.

On the other hand, there are seven-year elementary schools in the United States, which goes to show that there is nothing sacred about the eight-year school. In many of our southern states the seven-year school flourishes and is retained by men and women of this organization who are thoroughly acquainted with the eight-year school.

The famous experiment in Kansas City shows that a seven-year school is a perfectly rational and altogether economical school. So much misinformation has been circulated about the Kansas City schools that I took pains to secure from Superintendent Cammack information on the matter. The average time required by the pupils who last year completed the seventh grade in Kansas City was 7.65 years. We know that the average time required by children in eight-year schools to complete the eighth grade is eight and one-half years, so that it is seen that the Kansas City schools get their children through the elementary course a year earlier than other schools. Superintendent Cammack's figures show, also, that more of the children get through the Kansas City schools than in eight-year systems.

All these details show that the eight-year school is not a fixed law of nature. Where, then, did it come from? Sometime in the middle of the last century, when the high schools were very little developed, when the common school gave the common child all the training he was to get, the example of Europe was accepted and our eight-year school crystallized into form.

The European eight-year school is the product of an entirely different national attitude toward education. In Europe, the boy

or girl who goes to an eight-year school goes no farther. The eight-year school is a complete unit. The eight-year school of Europe is the device of aristocracy to give only a limited education to the common people.

The school of Europe which is intended for children who are going on is not an eight-year school. No child of the governing class goes to the eight-year school in Europe.

This is the thing we borrowed from Europe—an eight-year school for the poorer classes, an eight-year school which aims at a meager education, an eight-year school sharply marked off from the higher schools.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the age of fourteen, which was selected as the upper limit of compulsory education, was not determined by a careful investigation of the intellectual life of children nor of the subject-matter of instruction; it was originally established in Europe and in the traditions of our civilization because it is the period of confirmation in the church. In Europe religious education has always been a part of the work of the school, and when the child was ready for confirmation his education automatically stopped.

The student of education sees in the later developments of American schools a brilliant illustration of the biblical parable. This old European bottle, full of the New World ferment, is covered with the patches put on by conscientious but misguided hands, and yet hope grows less and less that our new ambitions can be held together in this antique vessel.

The elementary school breaks up when nature asserts itself. In the best schools of this country the upper grades are departmentalized. This means that the methods of teaching children cannot be the same in the lower grades and the upper grades. The division of the eight-year school into upper classes conducted by one method and lower classes conducted by other methods is a natural and wholesome readjustment.

Further evidence that the eight-year school is no unit appears in the fact that the present-day course of study is different from that offered in the old-fashioned unit school. One cannot keep an eighth grade alive on ditch-digging problems and definitions of

parts of speech. There are new courses in civics, new courses in local industries and in science. There is even a tendency to read some of the classics in English literature which used to be labeled as the exclusive property of the high school. The duplicating of high-school work has gone so far in the upper grades of the elementary school that harsh words are sometimes passed down by high-school teachers who find that Julius Caesar and other strictly high-school characters have been kidnaped.

What does all this duplicating mean? It means that you can surround the common people of the United States by an eight-year school, but they will break out as soon as they can. In America there is today in reality no eight-year school. The shell is broken, save only in those unfortunate localities where some arch-conservative is holding it together by devices which repudiate nature.

If we turn from worn-out European tradition to scientific studies of human nature, or even to observation such as a sensible teacher can make, we find that it is the twelve-year-old child who is putting away childish things in the first flush of adolescence. The twelve-year-old child begins to look into the larger world. He begins to think of his duties to society and himself. When he is fourteen or fifteen he will be half through the critical period of adolescence. If you want to influence an adolescent in a large way, you must begin at twelve, not fourteen.

Another product of the science of human nature is the principle of individual differences. The fallacy of believing that all pupils are exactly alike was the fallacy of a generation ago. The study of human nature and the needs of society have forced upon us a new conviction. We now realize that an individual, to be a productive member of a democratic society, must play some part other than that which is played by his fellows. In our schools we must provide preparation for the diversified duties of democratic society by giving full recognition to individual capacities and individual training. Children in the lower grades exhibit personal characteristics which deserve attention; but in those early days, when the most fundamental types of learning are being worked out, the common traits of human nature are in preponderance. By the time the

child has reached the fifth and sixth grades his personality begins to express itself emphatically in new ways. Having cultivated acquaintance with the fundamentals of knowledge, he now begins to make applications of knowledge to his own individual life, and the period of adolescence finds him ready to assume personal responsibilities and make personal decisions with regard to intellectual and moral matters. Whether we like it or not, the child in the seventh grade is growing into an individual. Whether we like it or not, his tastes and outlook will begin to mark themselves off sharply from the tastes and outlooks of other members of the class. That school alone is intelligent in its management of seventh-grade children which recognizes the fundamental principle of individual differences.

There are those among us who contend that children of this age must be driven into the same mold, that they must be made to fit some abstract notion developed in the mind of the pedagogue. Some of these conservatives may have their way for a time, but the years will prove that their conservatism is falsely conceived; that education is most appropriate to a democracy which is most broadly planned and executed.

Up to this point we have shown that reorganization is going on in our school system through the changes which are naturally developing in the elementary school. If we turn abruptly to the high school, we shall find there a tendency toward reorganization which is even more pronounced. The high school has been in some degree from the earliest period an institution organized to give to all its students a broad outlook upon life. Some high schools have degenerated into appendages of colleges and have been satisfied to offer merely a narrow preparatory course. But the typical, the vigorous example of the American high school has been characterized by the broad purpose of introducing the student to life. The great fields of human knowledge are to be canvassed by the student in series of courses which carry him through history, literature, science, and mathematics. In our modern high school there is added to this list of academic subjects an intensive study of the vernacular, and a whole series of practical and industrial arts which are to widen the student's horizon. The result of this ambitious

program is that the curriculum of the high school has come to be so crowded that it is quite impossible to meet the demands in the short four years allotted to this school. The Committee of Ten, when it made its report in 1894, saw very clearly that the secondary school cannot do the work which it must undertake and confine its program to four years. The pronouncement of that committee in this matter is perfectly definite and is as follows:

In preparing these programmes, the Committee were perfectly aware that it is impossible to make a satisfactory secondary school programme, limited to a period of four years, and founded on the present elementary school subjects and methods. In the opinion of the Committee, several subjects now reserved for high schools—such as algebra, geometry, natural science, and foreign languages—should be begun earlier than now, and therefore within the schools classified as elementary; or, as an alternative, the secondary school period should be made to begin two years earlier than at present, leaving six years instead of eight for the elementary school period. Under the present organization, elementary subjects and elementary methods are, in the judgment of the Committee, kept in use too long.¹

The secondary school is thus on record as having discovered the problem of reorganization before the lower school became clearly aware of it. Even today we have a situation which can be described in somewhat the same terms. The secondary-school people are taking up the innovations of the intermediate school or the junior high school with enthusiasm. Elementary-school officers, on the other hand, are somewhat more conservative. The elementary-school principal hesitates to lose his upper classes; the elementary-school principal is afraid that he is to be deprived of his most experienced and efficient teachers. While the high-school people are driven by sheer necessity to accept a change, the elementary-school people are not convinced, because they feel that it may be possible by makeshift devices to evade for a time the real issue.

The evidence that the high school is compelled to expand may perhaps be made more impressive by calling attention to the fact that it has already expanded at the upper end into the Freshman and Sophomore years of college. There is not an American college which does not complete the secondary course of its students. In

¹ *Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies* (published for the National Education Association by the American Book Company, 1894), p. 45.

many institutions this is done by an evasion which can hardly be described as subtle. In these cases the college prints a long list of requirements, accepts students who do not fulfil these requirements, and then compels these students to make up conditions after entering. A condition is a confession that the college cannot demand from students its own prescribed secondary course.

Other colleges deal with the problem more directly and say to the student: Take elementary German or French, elementary history and science, in the early years of your college course, and thus complete the broad survey of human knowledge which the high school could not complete. Until you finish this introductory work we cannot let you specialize or enter the professional schools.

The evil of this situation lies not in the fact that the colleges are in reality secondary schools in their Freshman and Sophomore years; the evil lies in the fact that many colleges are making a frantic effort to force the high school to do more work. Students take not four but five and even six units in a year, in the effort to cover human experience in four years. The high school needs relief, and the broadest educational statesmanship will be exhibited in providing this relief.

It would be easy to pile up arguments for the reorganization of the high school. What does it mean that some of our better schools are organizing two-year courses? What does it mean that the elective system has come to the rescue of the first year? What is supervised study? Every reform in the high schools is an eloquent pronouncement in favor of an extension and a modification of the present school organization.

Why one should have to present all these facts in the form of arguments is hard to understand. Let one look out over our schools and he will see the change coming. This is not a prophecy; it is a fact. More than 10 per cent of the approved high-school systems in the North Central territory are at work today on the problem of organizing intermediate schools. We ought to have every ounce of our energy to devote to the discussion of the best way of carrying out the program. It is truly irritating that one must pause to say, "Come with us; it is so, it is so," when he should be in council discussing the next step forward.

Perhaps there are some who do not understand why in our day this movement is so swift. Perhaps those who hold back are merely dazed by the rapidity of the change. There is an explanation for all this, and perhaps we shall do well to give that explanation in all detail.

When the Committee of Ten made its report, it had a theoretical insight into the situation, but its contentions operated only very feebly in bringing about real changes. This teaches that change in organization does not grow out of theory, and we have new confidence in the vitality of the real changes of today. In the same way, the forces that have been operating to change the elementary school have been at work slowly until, finally, within the last few years, there seems to be a consummation of this movement with a rapidity that is literally astonishing. When the historian of education writes an account of the last five years he will point out the fact that during these years the great fundamental need of social economy bore down upon our people with unmistakable emphasis. It made very little difference in the early days of our American civilization that a student lost one or two years through our clumsy school organization; but today we are not at liberty to waste the time of students in any sense of the word. We must give to students and we must give to communities the best forms of organization possible. There have been inco-ordinations in the earlier years, as every serious writer on education has realized and pointed out. Today, the public is calling upon us, in an age of efficiency and scientific insight, to cure these inco-ordinations. We are forced to act and act promptly. What was theoretical discontent has become a real demand for improvement.

Curiously enough, this demand for economy is misunderstood by some of our conscientious colleagues. They think of intellectual parsimony when we speak of economy. They think we are going to hold back something from children. They cry out for the old-fashioned waste as the sure mark of generosity. Let us exercise what charity we can with them. Let us tell them that economy means better organization, less friction, more rapid progress, less loss. Everywhere the forces of society are set in the direction of improving the opportunities of every child. These opportunities

must be so complete and so well organized that there shall be no question at all about the investment of equipment and teaching which society is making in the schools and the investment which the child is making in time and energy. We must see to it that there is no wasteful duplication. We must fit the courses to the needs of the individual child. We must fit these courses to the needs of his growing mental life. We must change the methods of our administration at a time when it is appropriate to the child's change in mental attitude. Anyone who stands in the way of this movement is an enemy of society and an enemy of the individual child. Economy does not mean something that is narrow and limiting; it means, rather, a better organization.

Sometimes it has been said by those who oppose the intermediate school that the break between the sixth grade and the seventh grade will be widened by this new form of organization. They are saying, also, that the break between the ninth grade and the tenth grade is a menace to the fuller development of the child's education. The answer to these criticisms lies in the fact that the whole motive of this organization is to create a continuity where heretofore there has been a disjointed and wastefully duplicating system. The seventh grade is to recognize the individual child's needs, and is to give him such a course as is suited to his adolescent experience. In doing this it will effect a change in methods of operation just at the point where the child himself is undergoing a change. The child will reach out and meet the change in school organization which is provided for him. To delay this change until two years after the child is prepared for it, as we do in an eight-year school, jeopardizes the whole relation of the school and the pupil. To make the change at the time in the child's life when he is ready for it, and when the change will be congenial to his needs and intellectual demands, is to economize his life and energy in the largest sense of the word. We avoid a break by moving parallel to the child's own motion, not crossing him obliquely in the path of development. In exactly the same way, if we change the first year of the high school so as to make it fit the child's needs, we shall effect economy by removing those obstacles to the natural progress of the pupil which now exist in the first year of the high school.

The effect on teachers and school officers will be as wholesome as the effect on students. It is quite impossible to work out these changes which are contemplated in the organization of an intermediate school without showing the irrationality of all the harsh feelings and criticisms that heretofore have existed between the elementary school and the high school. We shall make for unity by cultivating in the school organization itself a new spirit of adaptation of the courses to the students. If the whole corps of teachers could be trained by this new form of organization to see that the one dominating principle of school organization which is acceptable in modern society is the principle of continuity and adaptation to the child's needs, we shall have eradicated those personal animosities which have in the past so often expressed themselves in the petty criticisms passed back and forth between shallow-minded partisans of distinct and antagonistic schools.

My time is nearly up. In these few paragraphs I have tried to outline the changes which are transforming the eight-year school into a richer school, better adapted to the children and better related to the other members of the school system. I have tried to show that the high school, too, is changing.

The consummation of these changes is seen in a new amalgamation of those grades which have until now been universally held apart. The seventh, eighth, and ninth grades belong together. No artificial line can permanently divide them. As we become more intelligent in our scientific insights, as our social life expresses itself more freely, we become vividly aware that the sixth grade is the natural point of differentiation and that the problems of secondary education unfold themselves from the child's twelfth to eighteenth years.

The new order of schools is not an imitation of an outworn model; there is here all the vigor and appropriateness of a new social life finding its large and natural expression. There is a cure in this new organization for the littleness and provincialism of those earlier days of separation.

Surely the burden of proof lies heavily on the shoulders of anyone who would oppose this movement. He must show that the old order is efficient, economical, and full of harmony. He must

make us believe that the upper years of the elementary school are like the lower years. He must persuade us that the high school can give an adequate view of life in four years.

He must not only persuade us, but he must also persuade the children in the schools and the parents in the homes. The strength of this new organization is in the fact that it meets a felt need. Where it is put into operation it holds children in the schools, equipping them for life in accordance with the laws of their natures. This movement is a great substantial social fact, and he who opposes it must answer to society.